

Pioneering Web 3.0 through Smart Sites

By Florin Muresan

Web 3.0 is an unshaped concept. It's a dream, but like any dream, it needs people to dream it. And people to find the key to unlock that door.

So how do you find the people? How do you find that key? Let's consider for a moment that we don't find the key. The key and mostly the idea, finds us. We just receive it and have to make use of it, spread it, make it awesome ! This a story of things that lead to other things, some greater than others. This is a story of reaching Web 3.0.

[Introduction - How do you get to the idea of Web 3.0 ?]

It all started from an urge of making website builders awesome. Me and my associates, were having much success with a website builder, called Cifnet, which Calin Vingan (current CEO of cif2.net) built back in 2007. It was a great CMS platform that was used by over 10.000 people in Romania. Most of our clients were businesses. But of course, tech has evolved very much from 2007, and by 2010 we felt like we wanted to improve that platform and go to something bigger. Something different. Something that... Yes, you're right. We did not have a clear idea. And, in my opinion, that's the beauty of it.

We built and built, trying to give a new angle, a new spin to Website Builders. So we worked hard, because we felt that we were onto something, we knew that we were going to reach something awesome. The platform we were developing caught a very interesting shape and it included up-to-date tech, with all sorts of intuitive editing possibilities. It was great for a Web 2.0 web app.

That's when I got the idea that hey! Much can be achieved through Web 2.0. Let's make Renaissance 2.0. I worked on that idea, feeling that it was the future and that it could bring great benefits to people's lives.

I presented my idea at a Toastmaster's event and people responded well to it. They found it interesting. But there was this journalist, Mihai Gotiu, who was like: "Yes, nice, but there's already talk of 3.0. So why focus on Renaissance 2.0 ? Do 3.0 ! It's the future".

Well I will admit that I was all: "What's this guy talking about ? There is no definition for Web 3.0. Just some opinions as to what it might be somewhen in

the future. Is he crazy ? I mean, there is Marketing 3.0, which is still not very much known, but 3.0 .. really now ?"

Yup, but deep down in my soul I knew that was a challenge for me. So: Challenge Accepted ! Great. Now I was in a very dim place, because everything was so unclear. 3.0, what is 3.0 ? Is it anything like Marketing 3.0 ?

I didn't know exactly what to expect from this unclear Tech concept. But I knew in an instant that for it to happen, I had to push technology further. But let's see some basics, let's see some of the ideas that go around about Web 3.0. Shall we ?

[Web 3.0 - An attempt to define it]

It's hard to say what the definition for Web 3.0 is. That's why this will be an attempt at defining it. Many others have tried to find this "Holly Grail" of the Internet, but so far, there isn't a stable definition.

Some people believe that Web 3.0's most important features are the Semantic Web and the personalization of the web. Conrad Wolfram has argued that Web 3.0 is where "the computer is generating new information", rather than humans.

There are some other ideas, such as the fact that Web 3.0 will be when humans will be "plugged to the Internet" from the cradle and unto the grave. Others consider the Semantic Web to be a whole new Web 4.0.

" According to some Internet experts Web 3.0 will allow the user to sit back and let the Internet do all of the work for them. Rather than having search engines gear towards your keywords, the search engines will gear towards the user. Keywords will be searched based on your culture, region, and jargon. For example, when going on a vacation you have to do separate searches for your airline ticket, your hotel reservations, and your car rental. With Web 3.0 you will be able to do all of this in one simple search. The search engine will present the results in a comparative and easily navigated way to the user. "

- from wikipedia.org

" I have a dream for the Web [in which computers] become capable of analyzing all the data on the Web – the content, links, and transactions between people and computers. A 'Semantic Web', which should make this possible, has yet to emerge, but when it does, the day-to-day mechanisms of trade, bureaucracy and our daily lives will be handled by machines talking to machines. The 'intelligent agents' people have touted for ages will finally materialize. "

–Tim Berners-Lee, 1999

Now, let us "digest" these a little bit. If you think of Tim Berners-Lee's idea and the example given in the paragraph taken from Wikipedia, doesn't it make your mind go to Mint ? Yes, the startup that began spreading like wild fire, because it knows how to search data about your accounts, wallets, spendings, the budgets you want to use for certain activities, in a very Smart (pun intended) way. Basically, it does the whole sorting part for you, making your life easier when it comes to paying bills and checking your spendings.

The idea of Semantic Web is all very nice, but it will probably not be 93% successful ever. You would need a whole team of profilers working with entrepreneurs and tech-heads. Ok, this is just an opinion, so let's just take John Smart's idea and place the Semantic Web in the field of Web 4.0.

Great ! Now back to Web 3.0. Wait. First, let's take a walk through Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Marketing 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. You don't just call numbers because that's what you wanna do. There has to be a correlation between them. So let's analyze these in parallel.

Web 1.0 was the basic website. You got to a website, had an awfully hard time getting products into a shopping cart and then buying, end of story. Or, you had to watch photos of products, download catalogues and then write an email to the owner with the names of the products you wanted. There was only the website. You had no real say, just observed.

Marketing 1.0 cared about selling products. Selling many products. And that was it. It was a product-oriented kind of marketing. There was just the product. And it had to be bought.

You see? Both are 1.0. Both are oriented on products, not on the people who buy them. Customers had to get those products, so even if something was not

completely right with them, they still got the products and that's that. These two may not have been in the same time period, but they did act the same way. We are not talking about right-on chronological timeline, we are talking about the relation between Web X.0 and Marketing X.0.

Then, the world changed. There were a whole lot of products available for the clients. Clients could buy this or that. They could go to this website or to the other website, what did they care ? They had freedom to choose from a whole lot of different options.

Thus, came 2.0, both in marketing and in Web. The marketing became client-oriented. The client had to be pleased about the products and the way they were treated by the companies. Clients began talking between them and now it had a direct impact on sales. On the Web, people found out the same thing after a while. Now they had a voice. They could leave feedback on forums, online shops, blogs, social media, etc.

People began having a voice in 2.0. Well, snap ! Companies needed one too, or just needed to help them exercise that voice. Brands were created. Social Media was created. Sweet.

But it did not stop, of course. People became even smarter and started finding out all sorts of things about everything that was happening in the world. Marketing 2.0 was done to make a difference between those who were 2.0 and those who weren't. But most became 2.0 after a while. So what could make a Brand different from another now ? The things that consumers learned about those brands. The things they started to find out about those brands. Like if a brand helped Japan after a tsunami or not. If they helped develop the educational sector in Africa. If they actually gave something back to men kind. Yeah. People started caring about stuff. So, companies climbed to Marketing 3.0 and began doing all sorts of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Campaigns.

What did they get from this Marketing 3.0 and from the fact that Corporations showed they cared about the world ? They got a "soul" in the vision of the clients. Yes, that's right. Companies started having a soul. Marketing 3.0 gives them a soul.

So what about Web 2.0 ? What did the web do ? Why did it not climb up to Web 3.0, yet ?

I mean, Social Media is awesome. But it's still 2.0. It's just humans interacting with humans, through machines, websites, whatever you want to call them. Humans do mostly everything (I think everything) manually (when not using Twitter Spam-Bots, but I am referring to real interaction, not spamming activities and mal-practices). So it's Consumer 2 Consumer, Business 2 Consumer and Business 2 Business (yes, 2 is for just 2 sides that are involved in the process and it's a 2.0 thing). Everything made until now is 2.0. Well, mostly everything, because some tech has already started to mutate.

Web 3.0 will be when the Web will begin having a Soul, just like it happened with Companies and Brands in Marketing 3.0. It will be when the Web will start interacting with the users.

Wow ! Yup, but more on that in a short moment.

[Pushing Technology Further]

Remember how I said that technology needs to be pushed further on ? I assure you that this idea had not first occurred to me whatsoever.

It occurred to the first guys who decided: "Hey ! We have computers and advanced computing systems. Let's make telephones Smart !" and the enthusiasts who said: "Yeah, that might be something, I guess". It was. You have a dumb phone in your left hand and a smart phone in your right. You look at each of them, compare, but are still attracted to the smartphone and not only because it's a shiny iPhone 4 or something. It's because you became attached to it, in the way that you feel you need the telephone more than just to send SMS and call people. Even more than to have contacts on it, or to write a small, limited shopping list. You need it to help organize your life, your daily activities. You don't want to sign in to all sorts of email websites every time to see if there's a new mail for you. You want your phone to push it to you, to have your telephone tell you: Dude, you've got mail !

And that's not even half of it. The phone can tell you stuff related to your Facebook and Twitter accounts, messages you receive there, whatever. You take notes in the "clouds", which you can access later on from your laptop. You can unlock the door to your house over Mobile Internet. You can have your dear

beer-cannon throw you a beer in bed, through your smartphone. Nice, right ?
Telephones know to do stuff right now.

As I've said earlier, they know what's up with your bank accounts and can alert you if they "think" something suspicious has been going on in your bank accounts.

The "platform" for telephones to become Smart was built. Smartphones were invented, people started using them and they saw that it was good. New entrepreneurs came and made them even more awesome. The guys who made Lokitron (the one with locking/unlocking your door through mobile internet), or the one with the beer cannon app, or the Founder of Mint, the startup with the bank accounts. And I am certain that even more great apps will come, to make phones even Smart-er.

So you see? These guys pushed technology further, for mobile phones, and got to something awesome, which we all love these days !

But phones were definitely not the only things which could become Smart. And Google proved that, by launching GoogleTV. They've made TV sets Smart. Yup, not only phones are smart anymore. Television sets have also gone smart.

Making television smart. That was an interesting idea. I found it really amazing. And then, like a 300kW of raging electrical current, it struck me ! Dude, what was I thinking ? Wait.. what was I not thinking ? Check this out.

I was consumed with making websites from a different angle, making them more awesome, somehow. That's exactly what the first guys who made smartphones tried to do, too. That's what the GoogleTV guys wanted to do, too. Now it all made sense.

Finally it made sense. We were actually building Smart Sites. And it does make sense. I mean, websites are the heart of the Internet. You can't have Internet without websites. So why not make Websites become Smart ?

It was easy for us to take that step. Because all that time, we were actually building the very foundation for Smart Websites, we just didn't know exactly what it would turn into, that's all.

[Smart Sites - What are they ? What can they do ?]

Smart sites are websites gone awesome. They are different from normal websites in many ways. Old websites, such as old telephones or dumb phones, as I prefer to call them, can't "tell" you anything. You have to go searching for all sorts of data and information manually.

You could do some of the things you can do on your Smartphone on your old Dumbphone. It's just that it would take you a lot more time to do it, because you'd have to do every operation by yourself, with no help from the machine whatsoever.

The same with websites. Old websites were just there. You had to figure out absolutely everything and your website was just that place you had, but didn't really feel too close to, like you did to your smartphone.

Here's where Smart Sites come into play. A smartsite has personality. This is a feature that we are going to develop even further. Your website has a "soul", it exists there on the internet and it evolves with each thing going on: like you get more links to it, more visitor check it out, you post new blog articles, you get Apps, etc. It levels up and depending on it's level, it tells you what you need to improve, what you should pay more attention to, etc. It grows with your every action and dependent upon it. It slowly turns into an entity you're gonna love.

You can have your friends over on your smartsite. And to be really smart, your Cif (that's how we call smartsites made with our platform, cif2.net) sorts your friends and the people you follow, showing you first the people with the most activity in the past few weeks, so that in the front, you'll always have those people who are actually relevant to you. You don't need to see the smartsites that had no activity in a very long while. When you need to get to those, you can always just skim through your friends list. You need to see something of value to you, something that helps you.

Smartsites know things about other smartsites and they can show it to you. You can see your friends' smartsites and check out what they've been up to, who they follow or friend, what level their smartsite is, to know how good they're doing and you can also see their recent activity. Soon, more interaction methods between smartsites will be made available.

They provide you with sets of tasks, which they display to you, depending on their level. The tasks they give you to perform will help you understand what needs to be done with your smartsite in order to get results. Because you need results, whether you're a blogger, an artist or a company.

So you see ? It takes the info that is being stored in our database about your website and it sorts everything out, so that it can provide you with valuable information. It takes some of that information and it shows you that it is evolving very well and has more chances at getting results, so that you know you're headed in the right direction. It takes some other data stored in the database and it displays your friends, sorts them so that you see those who are relevant first and it tells you what you want to know about them, their friends, their recent activity, etc. And you never have to wonder about what would make your website even better, because you have tasks. What your smartsite does is it guides you, helps you develop it and turn it into something great. This is a unique experience, which you can't get from the old kind of websites.

We are working on developing more apps that make use of the huge amounts of data we get for every single smartsite registered on cif2.net

There will also be a developer's platform available, so that other smartsite enthusiasts can build their own apps and turn smartsites into something even Smart-er !

[Through Smartsites, we reach Web 3.0]

This is the begining of Web 3.0. We are talking about all the definitions of Web 3.0 which do not include Semantic Web (even though it might get to that eventually, but let's leave that one to Web 4.0 for now).

Good. Now let's rewind a bit.

Conrad Wolfram has argued that Web 3.0 is where "the computer is generating new information", rather than humans. Well, folks, smartsites are doing just that. They take what they receive in the database and turn it into new information. They take some data they get and generate you some valuable information. This part is Smart and it is done ! Also the part with Web Personalization. With smartsites, the web starts having personality.

" I have a dream for the Web [in which computers] become capable of analyzing all the data on the Web – the content, links, and transactions between people and computers. A ‘Semantic Web’, which should make this possible, has yet to emerge, but when it does, the day-to-day mechanisms of trade, bureaucracy and our daily lives will be handled by machines talking to machines. The ‘intelligent agents’ people have touted for ages will finally materialize. "

– Tim Berners-Lee, 1999

Our smartsites already "talk" to one another, exchanging information. They already are "intelligent agents". Of course, there is room for development, which we can hardly wait to do.

And now, the definition I gave for Web 3.0, as a parallel to the 3.0 development in Marketing. "Web 3.0 will be when the Web will begin having a Soul".

I have written that smartsites simply evolve, they grow, they tell you things, they do some thinking on your behalf. They may be just a part of the Internet, but they are alive, even in the current under-developed state. With more apps to come, we may get to something major. They develop a soul, just like brands did in Marketing 3.0. Be certain that your Cif will be different from one of your friend's Cifs. And as smartsites and the cif2.net platform will be developed, it will come to pass that no two smartsites can fully, nor trully be alike.

Web 3.0 will not be about machines taking control, but it will be about half-human input, half-machine input. Needless to say, this means Smart technologies. This means smartsites, smartphones, smart TVs.

If you consider this carefully, we already reached Web 3.0. A little more developing and we will actually be inside the Web 3.0 Era.

Again, think back a little, to what I wrote on the 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0. Here are some sketches to illustrate these concepts:



Evolution of X.0 in Web and Marketing:

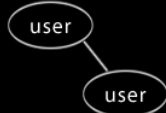
Web 1.0

a static website

Marketing 1.0

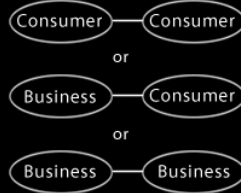
a product

Web 2.0



U2U - user2user, interaction, social media.

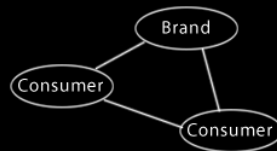
Marketing 2.0



C2C, B2C, B2B

then =>

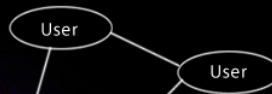
Marketing 3.0



NOW ...



Web 3.0



the web

THROUGH SMART SITES

A little explanation for the Marketing 2.0 drawing: consumers interacted with other consumers, but in that case, the brand had no say, it had no input. But

when it started having a "soul" in Marketing 3.0, it began sending it's input into the consumers' conversations, it was no longer something distant. Brand makes education in a poor country much better, you don't care any longer that you heard something bad about the brand, because you KNOW the brand and what it stands for and it kind of tells you "I would never do that". And you believe it.

Now about the drawings with the Web. You see, in the last one with 3.0, there is input from 3 sides. Two human sides and one computer side which talks in it's own way with both human parties of the Web. The web's becoming alive and it's turning 3.0. It's starting to have its own voice. It interacts with the two human parties.

Gentlemen and most wonderful ladies, you are standing on the edge of a whole new ocean of 3.0. Right on the very edge. Do you feel the breeze? So revigorating. PLUNGE IN! ... **Experience the future.**

[The Author]

This paper has been written by Florin Muresan, Founder and Chief Branding Officer of cif2.net, Online Entrepreneur, Bringing out the Awesome in every Project. Pioneering Web 3.0.

Cif2.net is the platform that builds these incredible smartsites.

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